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“On the Cusp of Half-Remembered Prophecies”: Interpreting Prophecy in George R. R. Martin’s
A Song of Ice and Fire

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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in
English

by

Patrice Loar

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Abstract

The prophecies in George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* series are unclear and often appear to have multiple possible fulfillments, or none at all. In addition, some of these prophesied events occur before they are introduced, which further contributes to the lack of clarity in interpreting them. My thesis will discuss the methods by which Martin offers readers clues to a prophecy's fulfillment and argue that Martin's use of these imprecise prophecies challenges high fantasy tropes about prophecies.

George R. R. Martin; *A Song of Ice and Fire*; *Game of Thrones*; Daenerys Targaryen; fantasy; prophecy

In a 2011 online interview, George R. R. Martin said that “*Lord of The Rings* is the mountain that leans over every other fantasy written since and shaped all of modern fantasy – there are things about it, the whole concept of the Dark Lord, and good guys battling bad guys, good versus evil, while brilliantly handled in Tolkien, in the hands of many Tolkien successors, it has become kind of a cartoon.” (Bernstein). While Martin specifically refers to the idea of the epic-scale battle of good versus evil, this idea may also be applied to his approach to prophecy; readers will not find the relatively straightforward prophecies of Tolkien in Martin’s Westeros. Instead of a written prophecy such as “*Renewed shall be blade that was broken/The crownless again shall be king*” (213) which clearly foretells the reforging of the sword Narsil and return of the king; readers of the *A Song of Ice and Fire (Song)* series are offered unclear oral prophecies. These prophecies often have multiple possible fulfillments and there is often a lack of clarity as to when a prophecy has been fulfilled. Some prophecies, if the reader follows the interpretation offered in the work itself, seem to be destined to remain unfulfilled. Martin subverts the high fantasy convention of prophecies that are first offered, and then obviously fulfilled by one character by often offering the “answer” or fulfillment of the prophecy before the “question” or the prophecy itself, although it is rarely an obvious fulfillment upon a reader’s first glance at the prophecy. Martin assists the reader in interpreting these prophecies with the inclusion of small hints that certain interpretations are the true solution to the prophecy; however, he also offers false interpretations and hints, and these “red herrings” represent Martin’s challenges of the easily-understood prophecy established in Tolkien.

In *A Dance with Dragons*, Daenerys Targaryen reflects that she “knew how it went with prophecies. They were made of words, and words were wind,” and the prophecies in *Song* are indeed as evanescent as the wind (326). In the essay “Of Direwolves and Gods,” it is noted that “even the cynical observations [expressed by Martin’s characters] do not reject the premise that prophecy can provide a true glimpse of what is to come; instead they cast doubt on our own ability to wield prophecy in a useful way” (Jones 116). The difficulty in wielding prophecy, however, is due to Martin’s writing of prophecies with multiple potential fulfillments and the combinations of literal and metaphorical interpretations of prophetic elements. Although prophecies in *Song* always come true, they challenge readers who attempt to wield prophecy in order to gain foreknowledge of the series’ events.

Martin does adhere to some conventions, such as the idea that history is cyclical, and events replay themselves throughout time; this may then be applied to the interpretation of his prophecies, as multiple mentions of a concept are always something to look for in this work. He states this idea in book four of the series, *A Feast for Crows*, by having a relatively minor character comment that “Archmaester Rigney once wrote that history is a wheel, for the nature of man is fundamentally unchanging. What happened before will perforce happen again, he said” (183). Although Martin’s most obvious use of this is the revelation of Westerosi history as the story advances, it is also a useful tool in interpreting the prophecies in Martin’s work, as the revealed history often parallels events that the prophecies foretell.

There is a growing list of scholarly studies of this series; however, much of the work on Martin’s novels focuses on topics other than prophecy. The existing scholarship on prophecy in *Song* focuses on characters other than Daenerys Targaryen, and rarely discusses the techniques Martin uses in prophecies, or how the work teaches readers to interpret them; those works that do

discuss prophecy often focus heavily on other characters whose arcs are also heavily influenced by prophecy. By closely examining the prophecies related to Daenerys Targaryen, this thesis will argue that Martin's use of these imprecise prophecies challenges high fantasy tropes about prophecies and their fulfillment.

2 AZOR AHAI REBORN AND THE PRINCE THAT WAS PROMISED

In ancient books of Asshai, it is written that there will come a day after a long summer when the stars bleed and the cold breath of darkness falls heavy on the world. In this dread hour, a warrior shall draw forth from the fire a burning sword. And that sword shall be Lightbringer, the red sword of Heroes (*Clash* 132)

“When the red star bleeds and the darkness gathers, Azor Ahai shall be born again amidst smoke and salt to wake dragons out of stone” (*Dance* 704).

The first prophecy that Daenerys fulfills is that of Azor Ahai Reborn, the reincarnation of a hero who fought against the darkness of The Long Night¹ with a burning sword; like many of the other prophecies she fulfills, she claims the role unknowingly.

The first portion of the prophecy indicates that all of the environmental factors are present in order for Daenerys to fulfill it by the hatching of her dragons. By the time this prophecy is mentioned, the Citadel has declared the end of a ten-year summer; as Martin often reminds the reader, a long summer means a longer winter. This change in the seasons occurs immediately following Daenerys' hatching of three baby dragons atop Khal Drogo's funeral pyre, under the red comet. Daenerys takes the appearance of the comet as a sign, reassuring her that this attempt to hatch the dragons will succeed. The hatching of the dragons would not have

¹ a period of darkness that, according to Westerosi legend, occurred during a winter that lasted a generation

been related to the prophecy had it happened in the middle of the summer, or in the absence of the red star. However, the comet's presence is not limited to the sky over Drogo's pyre, and winter is coming to all of Planetos; this serves to suggest that any action occurring under the comet can be linked to the prophecy.

In addition to the prophecy's stipulation of the time when the burning sword shall be drawn and dragons will be woken, there are also circumstances relating to the hero's birth. Azor Ahai will be reborn amidst salt and smoke, and Daenerys has a multi-faceted connection to smoke and salt. This connection begins even before she is born: her mother fled to Dragonstone the day after Daenerys was conceived, immediately following the fiery execution of Rickard Stark; the only way to access Dragonstone is via ship. Daenerys was born on Dragonstone in the middle of a storm; the waves that crashed against the castle on the day of her birth contribute the salt, while smoke comes from the Dragonmont, an active volcano. Daenerys is also associated with smoke from the fire which resulted in the hatching of her dragons, and salt in the journey she must take to reach Westeros over the salty ocean. Like the appearance of the comet, however, the limiting details of "reborn amidst salt and smoke" are vague and allow for a myriad of interpretations. Daenerys' eldest brother Rhaegar, too, believed he was the fabled hero, interpreting that "the smoke was from the fire that devoured Summerhall on the day of his birth, the salt from the tears shed for those who died" (*Feast* 555). The red priestess Melisandre of Asshai also creates a ceremony in which Stannis forges a "Lightbringer" on Dragonstone, with the sea providing salt and the smoke supplied by the Dragonmont and burning statues of the Seven.

Azor Ahai is prophesied to wake dragons from stone, which Daenerys does, hatching the first dragons seen in Planetos for the past one hundred and fifty years. Upon receiving her

dragon's eggs as a wedding gift, the giver tells her that "the eons have turned them to stone, yet still they burn bright with beauty" (*Game* 106); however, she feels their warmth from the beginning, even when other characters comment that they are cold to the touch. In itself, the warmth of the dragon's eggs is slightly prophetic, as Daenerys's sense of warmth from the eggs is connected to both the heat of the live dragons and the fire in which she must place the eggs in order to hatch them. The first signal that Daenerys is going to hatch the dragons occurs even before she receives the eggs; her brother often asks "you don't want to wake the dragon, do you?" when bullying her, referring to anything that makes him angry as "waking the dragon."

The idea of waking the dragon, however, quickly takes on a different tone. The night before Daenerys is to wed Drogo, she dreams

Viserys was hitting her, hurting her... "You woke the dragon," he screamed as he kicked her. "You woke the dragon, you woke the dragon." Her thighs were slick with blood. She closed her eyes and whimpered. As if in answer, there was a hideous ripping sound and the crackling of some great fire. When she looked again, Viserys was gone, great columns of flame rose all around, and in the midst of them was the dragon (102).

This dream is the first indication that waking the dragon refers to an actual dragon, instead of merely arousing the anger of a boy who, as the last male Targaryen heir, calls himself the last dragon; it is also prophetic of both the birth of Daenerys's stillborn, dragon-featured son and the hatching of her dragons. It also serves as an indication that Martin uses dreams, too, as a type of prophecy Viserys' metaphorical use of waking the dragon becomes literal in this dream, and in Daenerys' later hatching of her stone dragons. This reinforces that in Martin's work, the reader

may never know how literally to take prophecies, as the literal may sometimes seem metaphorical and the metaphorical, literal.

Daenerys has more dragon dreams before her dragons hatch, and draws strength from them and her association with dragons through her Targaryen heritage throughout the work. The fire which hatches the dragons also serves to connect Daenerys to the divine by symbolizing transcendence of the human condition (Frankel 138). That Viserys calls himself “the last dragon” helps to single Daenerys out, as she claims Viserys’ titles after his death, saying to Ser Jorah “Viserys was your king...I am his heir, the last blood of House Targaryen. Whatever was his is mine now” (*Game* 760). By having Daenerys claim her Targaryen inheritance, Martin also sets her up to claim the role of Azor Ahai through the Targaryen-specific related prophecy of the Prince that was Promised

Martin later offers additional information in the comment that Melisandre’s followers must sacrifice “two kings to wake the dragon. The father first and then the son, so both die kings.” (*Dance* 58), and the power in king’s blood is reiterated many times. Daenerys offers two “kings” to hatch her three stone eggs. The first, most obvious king is her husband, Khal Drogo, whose pyre the dragons were hatched in. The second “king” is Daenerys herself, Daenerys assumes Drogo’s mantle as the leader of what remains of the khalasar after his death and becomes acting khal even though she is female and her actions go against Dorthraki social practices. Even though she instinctively feels that she will not burn when she walks into the fire, Daenerys still makes a sacrifice to bring the dragons to life. Furthermore “only a king’s blood can wake the stone dragon,” and in the act of hatching the dragons, Daenerys has offered the blood of two kings to bring the dragons to life: Drogo’s blood through the burning of his body,

and her own by the intuitive self-sacrifice that leads her to walk into a fire that is clearly capable of incinerating multiple human bodies.

Martin further complicates the prophecy by arming the prophesied savior with a weapon other than Lightbringer, the flame-imbued sword that the legendary hero possessed; the dragons seem to function as Daenerys's Lightbringer. The most obvious of Lightbringer parallel is that they are hatched in the pyre when Daenerys burns Drogo; they are drawn forth from the flames, and the dragons are "fire made flesh" (367) rather than a literal flaming sword. These creatures burn with their own internal flame in addition to the fire-breathing habits they develop as they grow. Once they have grown, Daenerys uses the dragons as a weapon; this is first seen in the House of the Undying, when Drogon burns the structure and its inhabitants to the ground, when the Undying begin to attack Daenerys. The dragons are weaponized again during Daenerys's conquest of Slaver's Bay, when she releases them into the battle at Astapor to set the slavers aflame. By *A Dance with Dragons*, the dragons have become formidable beasts, which Daenerys might certainly use against any opposition she might meet, human or inhuman. In *Dance*, the dragons are again associated with Lightbringer, when it is said that the newly-hatched dragons "were a wonder. Grown, they are death and devastation, a flaming sword above the world" (242). This is the first time Daenerys has heard of the association between the dragons and the flaming sword, and this association is still not connected to Azor Ahai or to the followers of R'hllor; although this metaphor is meaningless to Daenerys in terms of the prophecy, Martin uses it as a hint to the reader that Daenerys is indeed the reborn Azor Ahai and the dragons will be her Lightbringer.

The primary function of Lightbringer is to combat the darkness that comes during a long winter. While the darkness referred to may be literal in the form of the long night, it is more

likely to be metaphorical; the followers of R'hllor say in their prayers that “the night is dark and full of terrors” (*Clash* 29). That the terrors mentioned are the Others is evidenced in the religion’s belief that the antithesis of their fire and light god R'hllor, is the Great Other. Aside from the similarity of their names, the Others and the Great Other share an association with cold, death, and the undead. Three substances are known to be effective against the Others: dragonglass, otherwise known as obsidian; dragonsteel², an unknown substance; and dragonflame. The existence of Daenerys’ dragons points strongly towards her fulfillment of the prophecy, as they provide the only weapon against the Others that would be useful in large-scale combat. As the new Lightbringer, Daenerys’ dragons contribute an important element to the fight against the “darkness” in the form of the evil Others. This contributes to the interpretation of Daenerys as the new Azor Ahai, as they function as the weapon that she will use in the war against the Long Night.

This interpretation of the dragons as the new Lightbringer and Daenerys as the figure who will save the world from the Others is supported in one of her dreams, and her dreams have been a trustworthy prediction of the future thus far. In this foretelling, “she dreamed that she was Rhaegar, riding to the Trident. But she was mounted on a dragon, not a horse. When she saw the Usurper’s rebel host across the river they were armored all in ice, but she bathed them in dragonfire and they melted” (*Storm* 355). Daenerys interprets the view of herself riding to battle as Rhaegar riding to the trident because it is a great battle that she has been told of since she was a child; that she is “mounted on a dragon, not a horse” foretells that she will ride one of her dragons, most likely Drogon, into battle against the Others (*Storm* 355). The only time an Other has been vanquished in the series so far, it melted in a fashion similar to the army in Daenerys’

² Dragonsteel may be related to Valyrian steel; however, as tales related to the Others predate the founding of Valyria, it is likely substance entirely.

dream; therefore, the army she fights may be assumed to be composed of Others, as the icy soldiers also melt and add their meltwater to the river. This dream further foreshadows that the dragons in their role as Lightbringer and Daenerys as Azor Ahai Reborn will be instrumental in the War for the Dawn.

The method of her dragons' hatching further serves to connect Daenerys to the legendary hero. In the forging of the original Lightbringer, Azor Ahai's first two attempts to create the sword are said to have failed. Similarly, Daenerys' first attempt to hatch the dragons' eggs in a brazier fails, as the fire she has lit does not provide enough heat, and it takes both great heat and a significant sacrifice for the dragons to hatch. Martin creates a parallel between the forging of Lightbringer and the dragons' hatching in that great weapons appear to only result from the loss of the weapon maker's loved ones. That Daenerys names the largest of her three dragons after Drogo, and the dead khal's strength seems to go into the dragons, especially Drogon, is again analogous to the way as Azor Ahai's wife's strength is said to have gone into Lightbringer when the sword was forged. To extend the idea of the weapon being imbued with the strength of lost loved ones, the other two dragons are named after Daenerys' other brothers, Rhaegar and Viserys.

In the tale of the forging of Lightbringer, Martin again creates a link to dragons; In the forging of Lightbringer, the hero's wife's "cry of anguish and ecstasy left a crack across the face of the moon" (*Clash* 139). That this creation of a weapon is said to have affected the moon is reminiscent of a myth about the hatching of dragons, which is told to Daenerys by one of her handmaidens; this myth says that "Once there were two moons in the sky, but one wandered too close to the sun and cracked from the heat. A thousand thousand dragons poured forth and drank the fire of the sun.... One day the other moon will kiss the sun too...and dragons will return."

(*Game* 230). Although Drogo is already deceased when Daenerys hatches her dragons, and so is not directly sacrificed to create a weapon, he is still sacrificed during his support her dreams of conquering Westeros, as the wound that led to his death is inflicted in a raid that Drogo initiates to raise funds for the necessary ships to travel to the Seven Kingdoms.

Martin, however, never makes it so easy to interpret the prophecy. This interpretation appears to be clear-cut only in that it is compiled into one place for the purposes of this paper; information about Azor Ahai and the forging of Lightbringer is never related to Daenerys, and is instead relayed to Davos Seaworth by his pirate companion. Other candidates for Azor Ahai also exist; Melisandre of Asshai is certain that Stannis Baratheon is the chosen one, and Jon Snow is also placed as a candidate for this hero.

In correlation to the prophecy of Azor Ahai Reborn is the prophecy of The Prince That Was Promised; this prophecy is specific to the Targaryen family, of which Daenerys is the last member. Otherwise, little about this prophecy has been revealed though characters combine the two promised heroes into one entity and most mentions of The Prince That Was Promised relate to Azor Ahai Reborn; the most relevant is Rhaegar Targaryen's belief that he is The Prince That Was Promised because "the smoke was from the fire that devoured Summerhall on the day of his birth, the salt from the tears shed for those who died" (*Feast* 555). According to Ser Jorah Mormont, Daenerys' only source for information about the Seven Kingdoms, Rhaegar was "the last dragon," but Daenerys is connected to Rhaegar from the first mention of Targaryens in the text; most importantly, Mormont says that Daenerys is like Rhaegar. This is reinforced by the final fever dream she has before she hatches the dragons, when she sees Rhaegar in his armor but sees her own face when she lifts the helmet's visor. The imprecision of this prophecy is explained as a translation error; the prophecy was originally in Valyrian, and referred to the

promised prince – or princess – as a dragon. As Maester Aemon, one of the few living characters in the series who has studied this prophecy, says, “dragons are neither male nor female,” and the misleading language led everyone to look for a prince when the prophecy was meant to be fulfilled by a princess. Although this, and the maester’s other contemplations of Daenerys, may be seen as convenient because this realization comes in *Dance*, over a year after the dragons’ hatching – Martin has hidden it in a book in which Daenerys never appears, a chapter that, aside from this comment, is unrelated to Daenerys, and in the emotional moment after Maester Aemon’s death. These elements make the information easy to overlook, and this serves to complicate the readers’ attempts to apply the information to the prophecy and Daenerys.

3 THE STALLION WHO MOUNTS THE WORLD

As swift as the wind he rides, and behind him his khalasar covers the earth, men without number, with arakhs shining in their hands like blades of razor grass.
Fierce as a storm this prince will be. His enemies will tremble before him, and their wives will weep tears of blood and rend their flesh in grief. The bells in his hair will sing his coming, and the milk men in the stone tents will fear his name...the prince is riding and he shall be the stallion who mounts the world
(*Clash* 471)

Martin’s prophecies are never as straightforward as the characters in the series interpret them to be, a feature which is especially exemplified in the prophecy of The Stallion Who Mounts the World. According to the crones of the dosh khaleen, Daenerys’ son was to be the figure who fulfilled this prophecy and after the events at the end of the first book, the prophecy seems doomed to remain unfulfilled, if taken at face value. Daenerys herself believes this, and

feels that the crones made a false prophecy that will never be fulfilled; she reflects in that she “knew how it went with prophecies. They were made of words, and words were wind” (*Dance* 326). However, the prophecy of The Stallion Who Mounts the World is still a viable prophecy if interpreted metaphorically and applied to Daenerys’ dragons, especially Drogon, rather than to her stillborn son.

The Stallion Who Mounts the World is referred to as a “prince” and a “khal” in various instances of the prophecies; although the dragons are not the traditionally-considered human princes, they may be considered princes in that, Daenerys refers to the dragons as her children; even before the loss of Rhaego, when holding one of the eggs she feels as if her unborn child is reaching out to the unhatched dragon “brother to brother,” and after her loss, she often refers to the dragons as the only children that remain to her (*Game* 380). Like Rhaego, the dragons travel with Daenerys through the Dorthraki Sea in their unborn state, and are present in Vaes Dorthrak when the prophecy is being made, although they are in Daenerys’s tent with her possessions and not in the cave where the dosh khaleen make the prophecy about Daenerys’s child.

This prophecy is made before the eggs hatch, when living dragons had been gone from the world for over one hundred years. Most information about them would have passed from living memory, especially due to the absence of dragons in Dorthraki culture and the non-literate nature of the society. Martin displays the Dorthraki tendency to use horse metaphors for anything beyond their immediate understanding, leading to beliefs such as the one that the stars are “horses made of fire, a great herd that galloped across the sky by night” (*Game* 471). By creating an additional layer of meaning in this way, Martin makes the prophecy even more challenging to interpret; readers are required to look through the lens of the Dorthraki culture that Martin has created before they may begin to apply the prophecy to any character in the

series, let alone any other character than the one who is explicitly stated in the work as the Stallion.

By making Drogon the Stallion Who Mounts the World, the text also implies that the stallion must have a rider; while the dragons are fearsome and intelligent beasts in their own right, they are, like horses, meant to be ridden. That this rider will be Daenerys is foreshadowed by the dragon's multiple tendencies to sense when she needs help throughout the books, from the time he is too small to fly to the first time Daenerys rides him when fleeing an assassination attempt in Meereen. In the final chapter of *Dance*, Drogon returns Daenerys to the Dorthraki Sea on his back, and the defeat and subsequent absorption of one or more khalasars into her growing group of followers would fulfill the prophecy that "all the people of the world" will be the Stallion's herd – perhaps with a slightly grisly connotation, as conquest means blood, and hunting dragons do not appear to discriminate between humans and livestock.

That The Stallion Who Mounts the World will "ride to the ends of the earth" has two meanings in the text; first, the Dorthraki world ends at the sea, and so the Stallion rides to the ends of the earth by boarding one of the vessels Daenerys commandeers at the end of *Clash*. The deeper meaning, however, is the more significant one; the "ends of the earth" can be interpreted as the upcoming War for the Dawn, in which Daenerys and her dragons will have a key role in defeating the Others and preventing the wintry apocalypse. This is characteristic of Martin's use of prophecy throughout *Song*;

4 THE HOUSE OF THE UNDYING

Daenerys receives the following warning upon entering the House of the Undying:

"Within, you will see many things that disturb you. Visions of loveliness and visions of horror,

wonders and terrors. Sights and sounds of days gone by and days to come and days that never were.” (*Clash* 594). Although not all of these visions are directly related to Daenerys’s future, they are each connected to her in some way, and each reflects Martin’s use of prophecy; like all of the prophetic elements in Martin’s work, these visions have multiple layers of meaning.

The layers of meaning are evident from the first vision that Daenerys looks in on, that of “a beautiful woman sprawled naked on the floor while four little men crawled over her” (*Clash* 596). The beautiful woman in this scene represents Westeros, where the War of the Five Kings ravages the land, as can be seen in many other characters’ perspective chapters. The “four little men” each represent one of the contenders for the crown; this scene presents the present reality of the Westeros Daenerys intends to conquer, but also presents a window into Daenerys’ past and, simultaneously, answers the question of whether or not Jaime Lannister is to be believed when he reflects in *Feast* on the abuse of Daenerys’ mother. Jaime’s memory that the queen’s maids had whispered that she “looked as if some beast had savaged her, clawing at her thighs and chewing on her breasts” and his assessment that it had been “a crowned beast,” (*Feast* 255) aligns with the actions of one of the ratlike men, who “savaged [the beautiful woman’s] breasts, worrying at the nipples with his ret red mouth, tearing and chewing” while another “was pumping between her thighs” (*Clash* 596). That Daenerys is said to have been born nine months after her mother fled to Dragonstone connects this scene intimately to Daenerys’ past.

Martin uses prophecy to offer the reader the answer before the question again in the next scene Daenerys sees: a feast where “the feasters lay strewn across overturned chairs and hacked trestle tables, asprawl in pools of congealing blood.... On a throne above them sat a dead man with the head of a wolf” (*Clash* 596.) Daenerys is shown this feast shortly before Robb Stark breaks his contract to marry one of Walder Frey’s daughters, resulting in the Red Wedding, a

feast at which Stark and his men are slaughtered. In terms of significance to Daenerys, the Red Wedding occurs during her attempt to rule Meereen, and so the feast scene may be interpreted as a warning about treachery, especially as the young queen is offered poisoned locusts at the reopening of the Meereenese fighting pits in celebration of Daenerys' wedding. By presenting the Red Wedding in a Daenerys chapter, Martin creates parallels between assassination attempts upon young rulers during events of social significance. Stark was betrayed by a lesser lord whose loyalty he attempted to gain, acting in concert with his enemies; Daenerys is similarly threatened by a group that resists her rule, and her wedding too results in bloodshed. The vision of the Red Wedding thus also warns Daenerys of betrayal by someone whom she believed was a loyal vassal, two books before Daenerys ever reaches Meereen and before the reader or Daenerys has use for the information that is provided. The reader is challenged to make the connection between the Red Wedding and Daenerys' attempts to rule, while Martin also offers an exact foretelling of the Red Wedding at the same time.

Daenerys' vision of the house with the red door in Braavos – which she associates strongly with home – and her childhood caretaker, Ser Willem Darry, is another instance of Martin hiding necessary information in chapters where they are difficult to connect to the related event. At first, this appears to simply be a vision of a time when she was safe, attempting to lure her into straying from the proper path through the House of the Undying. However, it is also connected to her later encounter with Quentyn Martell, and the potential for an alliance with Dorne upon her return to Westeros; Martell shows Daenerys a contract for the marriage of his sister, Arianne, to Viserys, in hopes of instead sealing the alliance by marrying Daenerys himself. This contract was signed by Darry as the Targaryen children's guardian, the prince of Dorne, and the Sealord of Braavos; upon seeing these signatures, Daenerys realizes this pact was

made when the children and their protector were living in the house which she saw in the House of the Undying vision. Even the place Daenerys associates the most with home, then, is connected to her conquest of the Seven Kingdoms. This, though, is not the first place Martin creates the connection; he introduces it in a smaller way near the beginning of *Game*, mentioning that when Daenerys thinks of Westeros, “in her mind’s eye, all the doors were red” (228).

In Daenerys’ vision of her father sitting on the Iron Throne just before his death and the Sack of King’s Landing, Martin offers another vision of the past that looks forward. The moment in which the king says “Let him be king over charred bones and cooked meat... let him be the king of ashes” also answers the question established in the following volume, *Feast*, of how trustworthy Jaime Lannister’s assertion that he killed Aerys before the king could burn King’s Landing (*Clash* 597). This vision occurs shortly before the discovery of a second hidden cache of wildfire beneath a King’s Landing landmark. The revelation that her father hid wildfire throughout the capitol city is likely to become significant when Daenerys attempts to conquer the Seven Kingdoms, as the dragons will certainly be a crucial element in her conquest. Martin, then, leaves a hint that King’s Landing will be engulfed in flame in this vision that relates so strongly to Daenerys’ heritage and her family’s motto of “Fire and Blood.”

In the scene of Rhaegar’s family, Martin again offers the audience layers of meaning. Like the previous scene, this vision connects Daenerys to the feelings of home and family that she often searches for throughout the series; the man in the vision is immediately associated with Daenerys’ family; through her misidentification of him as Viserys and the figure’s true identity as Daenerys’ elder brother, Rhaegar. The first hint that Martin offers of this figure’s identity, is the comment that the baby in the vision already “has a song...he is the prince that was promised, and his is the song of ice and fire” (597). When this information is combined with the

knowledge imparted in *Dance* that Rhaegar believed his son was the Prince that was Promised, Martin offers the reader sufficient information to interpret the vision as one of Rhaegar, his wife Elia, and their son Aegon. This serves to connect Daenerys to the family she never had, and to the prophecy of the Prince that was Promised through that family legacy. This vision is also tied to the loss of Daenerys' son, Rhaego, as each of these children was believed to be the chosen one to fulfill a prophecy, which then appears doomed to remain unfulfilled after the child's death. Ser Jorah says, "if [Aegon] was this prince that was promised, the promise was broken along with his skull when the Lannisters dashed his head against a wall" (749). This element of the vision and related prophecy of the Prince that was Promised also provides a connection between Daenerys. Martin uses the same misdirection in this declaration that Aegon is the Prince that was Promised as he does in the loss of Rhaego, the child who was supposed to be The Stallion Who Mounts the World.

After saying that "his is the song of ice and fire," Rhaegar looks at Daenerys as if he can see her; this creates another connection between Daenerys and the prophecy of the Prince that was Promised, and this look is another hint from Martin that Daenerys is the promised prince and, by extension, the reincarnation of Azor Ahai. The presence of this vision in the House of the Undying foreshadows the appearance of "Aegon Targaryen" later in the series; it is the first of these warnings, as Daenerys is later warned of the "mummer's dragon," which is also a symbol for the young man who calls himself Aegon. Rhaegar's final words in this vision, "[t]here must be one more.... The dragon has three heads," refer to the original trinity of Daenerys' conquering ancestors as well as the three-headed dragon on the Targaryen arms; it also refers to Daenerys' three baby dragons, and the need for riders for Rhaegal and Viserion, as

the image of Drogon as a reincarnated Balerion clearly shows that Martin is again using the cyclical nature of time to assist the reader in interpreting these prophecies (597).

Once Daenerys reaches the Undying, they offer her several prophecies in groups of three. In the three-part prophecies offered to in the House of the Undying, Martin establishes a formula which assists the reader in interpretation; he leads with a vision that has already passed, and thus teaches the reader how to read the visions that follow.

The first of these is “[t]hree fires must you light...one for life and one for death and one to love” (). The first fire, the one “for life,” was lit before the Undying offer this prophecy, when Daenerys builds and lights Drogo’s pyre. This fire may be seen as being “for life” in multiple ways. As a funeral rite for her husband, the fire is “for life” in the same way that memorials for the deceased are sometimes referred to as celebrations of life; the fire is also “for life” in that her dragons hatched from the conflagration, and thus the fire gave the dragons life. The fire which Daenerys must light for death is open to multiple interpretations; if this fire has been lit before the end of *Dance*, two possibilities are the fire that Drogon started in saving his “mother” from the predatory Undying and the fire Daenerys starts in Astapor, when she commands her dragons to incinerate the slavers. The second of these is more likely, as Daenerys herself lights the fire with a command to her dragons, while Drogon acted independently in the House of the Undying. However, neither appears to be favored within the text, and so Martin again challenges convention by offering multiple interpretations.

The next of these prophecies is that “[t]hree mounts must you ride...one to bed and one to dread and one to love” () The first mount, which the Undying name the “one to bed” is Daenerys’ silver mare, which Drogo gives to her as a wedding gift; shortly after receiving the gift, Daenerys rides away on horseback with her new husband to consummate their marriage,

which is often referred to in Westeros as the “bedding” portion of the wedding ceremony. The mount “to dread” is Drogon, as he is described as “Balerion come again” by one of Daenerys’ bloodriders (*Clash* 169); Balerion, the dragon ridden by Aegon the Conqueror during the first conquest of the Seven Kingdoms, is often referred to as “the Black Dread” in *Song*. Drogon as Daenerys’ mount “to dread” also aligns with the prophecy of The Stallion Who Mounts the World. In the pattern which the first of these three prophecies have established, the third mount has not yet been discovered.

The third of these three-part prophecies is that “[t]hree treasons will you know...once for blood and once for gold and once for love” (). The first of these treasons, Daenerys believes – perhaps correctly – is performed by Mirri Maz Durr in her failure to save Drogo, and the working of blood magic which returned Drogo to a vegetative state, but at the cost of Daenerys’ only son’s life. Treason for gold again offers multiple interpretations. One such is that Ser Jorah commits this treason in spying on Daenerys to receive a pardon that would allow him to return to Westeros and his lordship over Bear Island; another is Brown Ben Plumm who deserts Daenerys’ cause during the siege of Meereen and joins her enemies. The “once for love” appears again to remain as yet unfulfilled.

After receiving and failing to understand these prophecies, Daenerys is presented with a series of visions, which are once again divided into groups of three. In these three-part visions, Martin again uses the formula of leading with a vision that has already passed, such as that of Viserys with his crown of molten gold, which is shown in *Game*, in order to teach the reader how to read the later visions that follow, such as “A tall lord with copper skin and silver-gold hair...beneath the banner of a fiery stallion,” and the caving in of Rhaegar’s breastplate at the Ruby Ford (). The first three visions, which are followed by the label of “mother of dragons,

daughter of death” are of those she lost, her brothers and her son. Each of the figures in this vision had to die in order for Daenerys to develop into the mother of dragons and the fulfiller of prophecies; they are also connected to her dragons, as Viserion and Rhaegal are named for the family members she has lost. These losses contribute to her rebirth, earning her the title of “daughter of death” from the Undying.

Three more visions are grouped under the description of “mother of dragons, bride of fire.” In these visions, “Her silver was trotting through the grass, to a darkling stream beneath a sea of stars. A corpse stood at the prow of a ship, eyes bright in his dead face, grey lips smiling sadly. A blue flower grew from a chink in a wall of ice, and filled the air with sweetness” (602). The first of these visions recalls her wedding night with Drogo, and as such has already been fulfilled. The corpse at the prow of a ship in the second portion of this vision is more difficult to interpret; it may refer to the possibility that the Others and their undead servants are capable of sailing around the Wall, to Jon Connington who sails to Westeros with Aegon and due to his infection with grayscale will become a corpse with grey lips. The third vision appears to be connected with Jon Snow as his mother, Lyanna Stark, was fond of blue winter roses, and Jon is a member of the Night’s Watch, and lives at The Wall, an immense wall of ice in northern Westeros; however, unless a reader first correctly read the signs that Jon Snow is the son of Lyanna Stark, the third of these visions would remain as enigmatic as the “love” portions of the first three prophecies.

The visions Daenerys is overwhelmed by at the end of her encounter with the Undying appear without explanation at the time, and must be interpreted through other experiences Daenerys has throughout the work. She sees visions of her past, including her attempt to resurrect Drogo; her childhood in Braavos; the burning of Mirri Maz Durr, “a dragon bursting

from her brow”; the wine merchant who attempted to poison her and her unborn son in Vaes Dorthrak; and the white lion whose pelt she wears running through the Dorthraki sea (). After these, she sees visions of her future; she sees the crones of the dosh khaleen, bowing before her under the Mother of Mountains, and her reception after the liberation of Yunkai’s slaves. Of these visions, only that of the dosh khaleen has yet to occur, though the vision of the crones creates a connection to the prophecy of The Stallion Who Mounts the World. These fast-paced visions are, like all of the others in the House of the Undying, more easily taken at face value than others that Martin presents to us; however, making one layer of meaning easily comprehensible sometimes serves to camouflage the vision’s significance, challenging readers to perform more thorough analysis to interpret the vision’s meaning even as it frustrates them with the simpler interpretation.

5 SLAYER OF LIES

The Undying name Daenerys as “mother of dragons, slayer of lies,” and accompany this epithet with three visions; each of these visions seems to represent a lie that Daenerys will “slay.” The first vision is of a red sword, “glowing like a sunset [...] raised in the hand of a blue-eyed king who cast no shadow.” (*Clash* 602) This figure is likely Stannis Baratheon; however, Stannis has clearly not fulfilled the prophecy of Azor Ahai, and Daenerys will act as the “slayer of lies” in this case by fulfilling the prophecy of Azor Ahai’s rebirth. She fills this prophecy without knowing she fulfills it, much as she does the of Azor Ahai prophecy itself; although she knows Stannis has claimed the crown of Westeros, which she considers her birthright, she is as unaware of his claim to be the reincarnation of Azor Ahai as she is of her own position as this foretold savior, and of the prophecy itself.

The second vision is of a cloth dragon which Daenerys identifies as a mummer's dragon, a puppet used in plays to give the actors something to fight. As dragons in dreams and visions are often symbolic of members of the Targaryen family, the mummer's dragon may be interpreted similarly. It may represent either a false Targaryen or a Targaryen under control of a mummer. Both of these point to a character who claims to be Daenerys' nephew Aegon, who was believed to have had his head dashed against a wall as an infant during the sack of King's Landing. Tyrion Lannister encounters this "Aegon Targaryen" when Tyrion himself is in exile from the Seven Kingdoms; the young "prince" is in hiding with a friend of Rhaegar's, and has dyed his hair blue in his disguise as "Young Griff." The boy is the proper age to be Rhaegar's son, and claims that Varys exchanged him for a commoner child before King's Landing fell, then smuggled him to safety; he also has naturally light blonde hair and eyes that appear to be purple in some lights, which are features traditionally associated with the Targaryens. However, these features are more common in Essos, which has a longer history of Valyrian heritage, and so the boy could just as easily be a common-born child from the eastern continent; so long as he looks the part, his supporters may call him a Targaryen and attempt to place him in a position to rule as they have been grooming him to. This is supported by Varys' assertion that "power resides where men believe it resides"; that is, it does not matter if the boy is indeed the prince he claims to be, so long as the people believe he is (119). Varys' comment to the dying Kevan Lannister that Aegon is not dead may be taken this way as well; that the true Aegon was indeed killed during the sack of King's Landing, along with his mother and sister, but the boy calling himself Aegon has taken on the role of the dead prince.

Aegon is also the "mummer's dragon" due to Varys' role in rescuing him from the sack of King's Landing and perhaps, as Tyrion speculates, in placing him with Rhaegar's old friend

Jon Connington. Aegon has, as Varys says, “been shaped for rule since before he could walk...[and] taught that kingship is his duty, that a king must put his people first, and live and rule for them” (*Dance* 1036). This comment supports the idea that Aegon is, to a certain extent, under the influence of Varys, who arranged for his education; Varys also claims to be loyal to the realm, and to place the well-being of the smallfolk above loyalty to any of the highborn lords, and the idea that the king’s duty is to his people, which Aegon has been taught to believe, seems to point to a strong influence from Varys’ values of service to the realm. Daenerys is, once again, unaware of the existence of this Aegon. It is only through chapters unaffiliated with the young Queen that the reader learns of him, and he does not appear until *Dance*; although Martin does introduce the idea of the mummer’s dragon before the character who fulfills this role appears, he frustrates the clarity of Aegon’s role by never directly connecting him with the mummer’s dragon.

Another suggested candidate for this “mummer’s dragon” is Quentyn Martell, who is mortally wounded while attempting to kidnap one of Daenerys’ dragons; gaining access to the dragons’ pyramid can be interpreted as a type of acting, as he and his companions must impersonate the pyramid’s guards to gain access. However, this association is tenuous at best, as Quentyn never claims to be a Targaryen; he merely has Targaryen blood, which is in no way a unique trait, as most noble houses in Westerosi history claim a Targaryen in their lineage. Although the inclusion of Quentyn’s musings on his Targaryen heritage allows for this misdirection, to name the Dornish prince as the mummer’s dragon, would be a misinterpretation of Quaithe’s warning when there is a better candidate present in the work. Alternate interpretations such as these are common to Martin’s writing style; he offers red herrings, and the

reader must decide which is the legitimate interpretation, which character or characters fulfill the prophecy.

In the final vision of this trinity, Daenerys sees “a great stone beast...breathing shadow fire” take flight from a smoking tower (*Clash* 602). What type of beast Daenerys saw is not identified in the work; this implies that the beast is not a dragon, as the Mother of Dragons does not recognize it as such. The most likely candidate for this beast, as of *Dance*, is a griffin; this creature would symbolize Jon Connington, Aegon’s traveling companion, whose homeland is Griffin’s Roost and whose sigil is a griffin. Connington was exposed to greyscale – a contagious disease which causes the skin become stone-like and which is, in some forms, fatal – when rescuing Tyrion Lannister from the waters of the Rhoyme, and has been shown in *Dance* to have contracted the disease. As Connington has landed in Westeros, the “shadow fire” may be a dispersal of this disease, or its worse form, the grey plague, which will be spread by contact with Jon Connington and with other victims of the disease as more denizens of Westeros contract a form of the illness.

6 “TO GO FORWARD YOU MUST GO BACK”

“To go north, you must journey south. To reach the west, you must go east. To go forward you must go back, and to touch the light you must pass beneath the shadow” (*Clash* 498).

Of all of Martin’s prophecies, this appears to be the most similar to high fantasy tropes; it is as much a riddle as Tolkien’s riddle of Strider, and, at face value, appears to be the most easily explained. However, this prophecy is also the most difficult to interpret at anything other than face value, and so Martin again frustrates the reader’s attempt to use prophecies to gain insight

on the future of the series. Daenerys appears to be in the process of fulfilling the first two directions of this prophecy; from the time she hears it in Quarth, she travels southeast to Slaver's Bay even though her goal is Westeros, which is northwest of Quarth. Similarly, "to go forward, you must go back" seems to be fulfilled in her return to the Dorthraki Sea. It also, however, relates to the cyclical nature of time in the series; as more Westerosi history is intertwined with the action of the series, the narrative is indeed going backwards to go forwards. Daenerys immediately assumes that "you must pass beneath the shadow" means that she must travel to the shadowlands and, by extension, Asshai (*Clash* 496); however, in a 2008 interview, Martin commented that Asshai would be shown "only in flashback and memory, if at all," making it clear that Daenerys will not travel to Asshai at any time in the series (Asshai.com Forum Chat). Instead, Martin offers the reader another hint of Daenerys' role in the War for the Dawn, and that passing beneath the shadow is a metaphor for the beginning of the Long Night, which Daenerys will help to end, and so she will touch the light in bringing it back to the world.

7 "THE GLASS CANDLES ARE BURNING"

"The glass candles are burning. Soon comes the pale mare, and after her the others. Kraken and dark flame, lion and griffin, the sun's son and the mummer's dragon. Trust none of them. Remember the Undying. Beware the perfumed seneschal" (*Dance* 171).

Quaithe's second warning, though slightly more difficult to decipher, is again reminiscent of more traditional fantasy prophecies as it again appears in the form of a riddle and, like the other warning, is difficult to interpret at anything other than face value. The warning only acts as a prophecy when examined through the lens of Martin's multiple-layered prophecies; that it remains as a series of unclear prophecies even when explored in this way is another of Martin's

tactics to simultaneously encourage readers in their attempts to interpret these prophecies and frustrate the search for any definite foreknowledge about the series.

The glass candles of which Quaithe speaks are obsidian or dragonglass, candles; the most well-known of the glass candles are at the Citadel, the Westerosi stronghold of learning, although there also appear to be some in Quarth. These candles traditionally remain unlit, as they are impossible to light without magic. By the time of Quaithe's warning, the glass candles have been shown to burn again; one of Daenerys' hosts in Quarth mentions that lit glass candles have been observed for the first time in a hundred years, as one of the many odd phenomena that are reported after Daenerys and Drogon burn the House of the Undying. This event is hidden in the list of odd occurrences, many of which seem to be falsehoods, and are easily dismissed as more of the same until Quaithe's warning; another burning glass candle appears in a chapter that is unrelated to Daenerys, as Samwell Tarly observes a lit black glass candle in one Maester's study in *Feast*. That the glass candles are lit once again signals the return of magic to the world and Frankel speculates that "these candles may serve as a warning system to defend against [the Others]" (156). If this idea of glass candles as a warning system is valid, it aligns with Daenerys' role as Azor Ahai reborn and her key role in the war against the Others and provides a symmetry between this role and the fact that she returned magic to the world by hatching the dragons.

Shortly after Quaithe warns Daenerys about the pale mare, a dying rider from Astapor enters Meereen on a pale horse, but the horse itself is not the pale mare Quaithe has warned about. Rather, the dysentery-like disease that spreads through the city, which is brought through the gates by her rider and which earns the nickname "the pale mare" is the true threat to Daenerys' army.

The next sentence lists characters who will seek Daenerys and her dragons; although all of these seekers were journeying to Daenerys at the time of Quaithe's warning, some have since turned aside. Many of these seekers are identified by their sigils, just as members of house Targaryen are often referred to as dragons; additionally, they are listed in pairs, which groups them by their significance to Daenerys.

Although the kraken could symbolize any of the members of house Greyjoy, Victarion Greyjoy is actively seeking Daenerys at the end of *Dance*, and therefore is the most likely kraken for Quaithe to warn her of. Moqorro, the priest of R'hllor that is rescued from the sea by Victarion's ship, is likely the "Dark Flame" to which Quaithe refers, as his appearance lends to this description; Moqorro is a red priest whose skin is pitch black and he is clothed in the Greyjoy ship's black sails after his red robes are ruined, after which Victarion's crew takes to calling him the "Black Flame." Both of these characters are dispatched to Daenerys as agents of others. Victarion has been sent to Daenerys by his brother with instructions to deliver Euron's proposal to the young queen, but sails to Meereen with the intention to court her for himself; similarly, Moqorro was sent to Daenerys by the high priest of the Volantene Red Temple, but appears to have forged an alliance with the Greyjoy captain. Victarion and Moqorro, then, each plan to use any interactions they have with Daenerys to their own ends; Victarion to "steal" the courtship of her from his brother, and Moqorro to use her status as Azor Ahai Reborn to the red religion's ends, possibly including an attempt to bring about endless summer.

Much like the kraken, the lion could potentially symbolize any member of house Lannister; however, Tyrion Lannister is again the Lannister who poses the most immediate threat to Daenerys, and is therefore likely the one about whom Quaithe warned her. These two characters have turned aside from their journey towards Daenerys, though; Jon Connington

sailed to Westeros, after Tyrion advised Aegon not to approach Daenerys empty-handed. At the time of Quaithe's prophecy, both of these men were seeking Daenerys, but they have since abandoned the search. However, both Tyrion and Connington acted as counselors to Aegon, and therefore pose a threat to the dragon queen as they may be seen as assisting the boy who intends to take her position as rightful heir to Westeros.

Daenerys identifies the sun's son as Quentyn Martell, who is the heir to house Martell, whose sigil is the sun; the mummer's dragon, as mentioned above, is a reference to the young man who – unbeknownst to Daenerys – refers to himself as Aegon Targaryen. These characters are each Daenerys' suitors. Shortly after his arrival in Meereen, Quentyn suggests that he and the Queen marry and is rejected; similarly, Aegon expects to marry Daenerys, and expresses as much to Tyrion. Even after Aegon turns away from his journey to Daenerys and instead travels to Westeros, his guardian insists that he must remain eligible to marry Daenerys, should she ever come to Westeros. By pairing these characters in their suit for Daenerys' hand, Martin also implies that they will also be paired in their manner of death; just as Quentyn attempted to steal one of Daenerys' dragons and, in the process, was fatally burned by them, Aegon will also be engulfed in dragonfire.

Quaithe's suggestion that Daenerys "remember the Undying" invokes both the prophecies and visions Daenerys experiences in the house of the Undying and a reminder that things are not as they appear; the Undying themselves attempted to consume Daenerys after she went to them seeking help, and all of the visions she encountered while in the warlocks' palace were designed to trap her, despite their informative nature for readers who followed Martin's prophetic strategies. Daenerys interprets warning about the "perfumed seneschal," as being about

her own seneschal, and the fact that he is not dismissed after Daenerys' disappearance from Meereen is suspicious.

8 DANCING DRAGONS

"It is dragons.... They're coming.... They were dancing. In my dream. And everywhere the dragons danced the people died." ("Arianne")

In the *Winds of Winter* preview chapter published on Martin's website in January 2013, Teora Toland's dream of dancing dragons is dismissed as only a dream by everyone in the work who hears it, but the consistently magical and prophetic nature of dreams in *Song*, especially those of children, must be taken into consideration. Like every prophecy in Martin's work, every dream that has been presented the opportunity to has also come true; dreams, then, act in the same way that Martin's prophecies do. When examined through the lens of a cyclical history, this dream appears to intermingle a reference to Westerosi history and a prophecy of events to come; the Dance of the Dragons was a civil war of succession between Rhaenerya Targaryen and her half-brother Aegon II, and Daenerys' attempt to conquer Westeros seems poised to create another war between herself and the young man who calls himself "Aegon" who has recently landed in the Stormlands and is beginning his own conquest of Westeros.

Like many of the prophecies Martin offers, that of the new Dance of the Dragons has several possible interpretations, as both claimants in the historic Dance fought on dragonback. This leads to the possibility that during the new Dance of the Dragons, one of Daenerys' dragons will be stolen from her. The means of this theft might involve a dragon horn such as those the Valyrians were said to possess and use to control their dragons, as the text informs us that "dragonlords of old Valyria had controlled their mounts with binding spells and sorcerous horns"

(*Dance* 1005). Martin leaves a hint that at least one of these horns has reappeared in the world, as a horn named Dragonbinder is currently in the possession of Victarion Greyjoy. His brother, Euron, intends to use it to bind one or more of Daenerys' dragons to his will, though Victarion may learn to use it first, as he is both placed in a more advantageous position to use such a horn and provided with a means of instruction on its use. The use of the horn and a war between Daenerys and Aegon both appear to be equally likely interpretations of this prophecy as of *Dance*, and this is another way in which Martin frustrates any attempt to create the solution to a question; the reader must simply wait for more information to discover which is the correct interpretation of the prophecy and which was a false lead.

Martin also offers the option that this prophecy will be fulfilled when another character hatches dragons, which will then join the war that will inevitably begin when Daenerys attempts to conquer the Seven Kingdoms. This is the most unlikely of possibilities, as the dragon queen herself is the only character in the *Song* universe to have successfully hatched dragons in a century and a half, while others who have attempted only succeeded in making themselves look foolish, or paying with their lives. Martin himself says that Daenerys' hatching was "a miracle" (Transcript 1999) and so it is highly unlikely that another such miracle would occur, even with the recent surge in magical occurrences in *Song*. The supposed cache of dragon's eggs on Dragonstone – one of the more likely places for eggs to be hidden, given that the island was traditionally held by members of house Targaryen – is mentioned in *Dance*, and dismissed outright, as no sign of them was found in a search of the island; even if eggs were still hidden on the island, and seekers would first have to locate, and then successfully hatch the eggs. Euron Greyjoy also claims to have possessed a dragon's egg, which he claims to have thrown into the sea; while this is doubtful at best, Euron clearly has not hatched his egg, as no dragons are in

evidence in his company. He is unlikely to do so, as he has chosen to pursue Daenerys and her dragons. Martin again opens this prophecy to speculation; the dragons could be Targaryens, as the two have been used interchangeably in other prophecies, or they could be actual dragons such as Daenerys has.

9 CONCLUSION

Martin's view that prophecies "can add depth and interest to a book, but you don't want to be too literal or too easy" (Guxens) is clearly reflected in the prophecies in *Song*, especially those that are fulfilled by Daenerys Targaryen; these prophecies invite analysis of the novels, and almost demand multiple readings of each book in order for readers to be able to interpret these prophecies. Martin accomplishes this difficulty of prophecy by providing the fulfillment before the actual prophecy and hiding clues to prophecies in the point-of-view chapters of several characters, including those who are unrelated to the prophecy or its fulfiller. This combination of frustration and encouragement of the reader's attempt to interpret prophecies is Martin's response to the high fantasy tropes that followed Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. In preventing the prophecies in his books from being "too easy" and demanding that readers perform in-depth analysis, Martin offers a new method to reading fantasy fiction.

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